

CLAIMS

1. A lifting system, designed and suited for lifting a rocket into the atmosphere before the rocket engine is ignited, comprising:

a. at least one inflatable buoyant vessel that is designed to be filled with helium or hydrogen;

b. a liftable subassembly, comprising at least one pressurized tank suited for holding helium or hydrogen, and at least one pump or compressor coupled to at least one hose, said pump and hose being capable of partially deflating at least one inflatable buoyant vessel;

c. at least one liftable and flight-worthy structural component, having at least two rotatable wings affixed to opposed sides of said structural component;

d. at least one conventional aircraft engine mounted to each of said rotatable wings, and capable of generating upward thrust when the rotatable wings are positioned vertically, and forward thrust when the rotatable wings are positioned horizontally;

e. means for both (i) suspending a rocket from the lifting system, thereby allowing the rocket to be lifted into the atmosphere by the lifting system, and (ii) releasing the rocket from the lifting system, once the lifting system and the rocket have reached a suitable altitude during a launching operation.

2. A lifting system of Claim 1, comprising:

a. an array of dirigibles;

b. a tank-holding component which holds at least one tank that can contain pressurized gas;

c. a plurality of tethering components having sufficient tensile strength to allow the tank-holding component to be securely suspended beneath the dirigibles during a rocket launching operation;

d. a winged component, having at least two large propeller engines mounted on each of at least two rotatable wings; and,

e. means for both (i) suspending a rocket from the winged component, (ii) releasing the rocket from the winged component, once the lifting system and rocket have reached a suitable altitude during a launching operation.

3. A method of lifting a rocket and launching it from an elevated altitude, comprising the following steps:

a. suspending a rocket from a winged flightworthy structure having at least two rotatable wings with at least one conventional aircraft engines mounted to each rotatable wing, wherein the winged flightworthy structure is suspended beneath at least one inflatable buoyant vessel that is designed to be filled with helium or hydrogen;

b. rotating the rotatable wings into a vertical position;

c. using lifting power provided by the winged flightworthy structure with its wings and engines, and by the inflatable buoyant vessel, to lift the rocket to an elevated altitude, prior to igniting the rocket engine; and,

d. releasing the rocket from the winged flightworthy structure.

4. The method of Claim 3, wherein the winged flightworthy structure is used to establish a forward flying speed before the rocket is released.